

WASHINGTON, DC – A bi-partisan education bill that will improve the competitiveness of America's future labor force continues gathering momentum in Congress as more legislators join the list of supporters.

Just before Congress went into 4th of July recess, 67 U.S. House members had co-sponsored the "Enhancing Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Education Act of 2008," (H.R. 6104), which Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA) introduced in May.

The bill was simultaneously introduced in the U.S. Senate by Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL), where it is also gaining support.

"It is very encouraging to see so many colleagues supporting education. They understand the need to refocus our priorities and to create a coherent and coordinated strategy in the STEM area. Sen. Obama's commitment to our students and future workers has been instrumental in our policy formulation," said Honda, and educator of more than 30 years. "This bill is critical to our long-run economic health and our children's future."

Obama added that especially in times of economic uncertainty it was critical not to lose sight of education's role in maintaining American competitiveness.

"We must ensure the United States remains a global leader in scientific advancement and technological innovation, and that begins with strengthening America's schools," said Obama. "I am proud that so many of my colleagues have cosponsored this important legislation, which will help better coordinate state and federal STEM education efforts. I commend Congressman Honda for his continued leadership on this bill."

Among the original co-sponsors in the House are Rep. George Miller, chairman of the House Labor and Education Committee, and Rep. Vernon Ehlers (R-MI), a member of the Science and Technology Committee and also of the Labor and Education Committee. In the Senate, the bill is co-sponsored by prominent legislators such as Sen. Richard Lugar (R-IN) and Sen. John Kerry (D-MA).

In 2006, the federal government sponsored 105 STEM education programs through 15 different federal agencies at a cost of \$3.12 billion. Yet the following year, American students did poorly in a test offered world-wide that measures student proficiency in understanding and applying science.

Honda's and Obama's bill would:

- Reorganize the President's Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). OSTP has a STEM education subcommittee that has remained largely dormant over the past few years. The bill would raise that subcommittee to a committee level, giving it a mandate to work proactively at designing coherent STEM strategies.
- Create an Office of STEM at the U.S. Department of Education at the assistant-secretary level. This office will coordinate STEM education initiatives within the department and have a seat at the OSTP STEM Education Committee.

- Establish a voluntary Consortium on STEM education. The Consortium would be integrated by no less than five states. Its mission is to develop common content standards for K-12 STEM education, engineered at the state and local levels.

- Create the National STEM Education Research Repository. This would be a clearing house for educators to access the latest innovations and best practices in STEM education. This will break the silos that keep creative programs from being replicated.

“The positive comments I hear from my colleagues on both sides of the aisle gives me good reason to be optimistic about this bill,” Honda said. “Congress must be proactive in addressing economic concerns before it is too late. The support that is building around the eSTEM Act shows that Congress is not going to wait to address this critical need.”

For more information please go to <http://honda.house.gov/legislation/2008/stem.shtml>